

PASTORAL LETTER
OF THE
FIRST
National Council
OF THE UNITED STATES,
Held at Baltimore, in May, 1852.



BALTIMORE:
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY JOHN MURPHY & CO.
METROPOLITAN PRESS.
No. 178 MARKET STREET.
1852.

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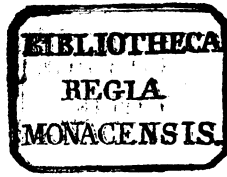
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PASTORAL LETTER.

THE ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS OF THE UNITED STATES IN NATIONAL COUNCIL ASSEMBLED AT BALTIMORE, TO THE CLERGY AND LAITY OF THEIR CHARGE, HEALTH AND BENEDICTION!

*Venerable Brethren of the Clergy,
and Beloved Children of the Laity:*

ASSEMBLED in National Council, under the sanction of Our Most Holy Father, Pius IX, we find no duty more imperative, and, at the same time, more agreeable to our feelings, than to address the flock committed to our care. The attachment to the doctrines and practices of Our Holy Religion which characterizes the Catholics of the United States; the docility and obedience which they have uniformly manifested, the cordial union which, notwithstanding the diversity of origin, customs and language, reigns throughout the whole Catholic Body in this vast country; their general fervor and devotedness in the exercise of the virtues of the Gospel, fill our hearts with joy, and more than compensate us for the cares and solitudes of the pastoral office. We are able to adopt the words of the apostle: "Our mouth is open to you,—our heart is enlarged."* "Great is *our* confidence for you; great is *our* glorying for you. We are filled with comfort: We exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation."†

*II Cor. vi, 11.

†II Cor. vii, 4.

The authority we exercise has been given us by Christ. We are His Ministers; ambassadors for Him. We claim no power, and seek no influence which He has not willed us to have. It is our duty to guard the sacred deposit of the faith; for to us has it been committed, and from us will it be one day demanded by our Heavenly Master. Having vouchsafed to speak, at sundry times, and in divers manners, in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all hath God spoken to us by His Son; and this Divine Son,—the brightness of His Father's glory, the figure of His substance,—has made us the depositaries of his doctrine, and “has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.”* Man having had need that God should teach him, ever requires to receive this divine teaching through a channel in which it shall be preserved from whatever might taint its purity, and thus destroy its authority. Not only must we know that God has spoken; we must also be assured that His voice is heard throughout all time. Although no longer visible to men, Christ, our God, has not left us orphans. He has sent the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete whom He promised; He has infused into the earthly elements which He selected for the formation of His Church, the breath of undying life; and that Holy Spirit ever abides in the Church, teaches her all truth, preserves her from every error, and renders her a sure guide to the pastures of salvation, to the fountain whence springs up water to eternal life. Thus is fulfilled the word: “He that heareth you, heareth me:”† thus is the Church, “the House of the Living God, the Pillar and the ground of truth;”‡ and on this is grounded the obligation which we urge with no less confidence than did the Apostles of Christ: “Obey your prelates, and be subject to them. For they watch as being to render an account of your souls, that they may do this with joy, and not with grief.”||

The source of this authority is Christ. The channel through which it is communicated to the other members of the church is the Bishop of Rome. The successor of St. Peter, is the heir of the privileges conferred on the Prince of the Apostles; on him as on the solid foundation which the wise architect has

* II Cor. v, 18.

† Luke x, 16.

‡ I Tim. iii, 15.

|| Heb. xiii, 17.

chosen, is the church built; to him, in the person of Peter, for whom Christ specially prayed, has it been given to confirm his brethren. As in the case of every other country where the Church has been established, our hierarchy has grown up under his fostering care; has developed itself, with his sanction and approval, in dignity and number; and its members, although spread over the wide extent which separates ocean from ocean, have, on the present occasion, joyfully obeyed his summons to assemble in National Council, under the presidency of a special representative of the Holy See in the person of the Most Rev. Archbishop of Baltimore. We rejoice at the occasion of proclaiming our attachment to the centre of Catholic unity; and we exhort you, brethren, to cherish a love for the Holy See, in which is preserved an unbroken succession of Pastors from the time of Christ to the present day; which has condemned all the errors that men have sought to combine with the doctrines of revelation; and which ever watches over the integrity of faith and ever guards the purity of ecclesiastical discipline. Let us hope that the erroneous ideas entertained by so many of our fellow-citizens, of the nature of the power which we recognise in the Bishop of Rome, as successor of St. Peter, will be removed, and that this chief See, whence sacerdotal unity has derived its origin, may be acknowledged as the centre of ecclesiastical authority, the source of all that is grand and imposing in the extent, union and permanence of the Church. Let us pray that all who are separated from the Church may be brought to the knowledge of the truth; that the appalling extremes to which error is hurrying those who have cast off the authority appointed by Christ, may cause men to recognise a principle which alone can unite them in the one fold of the one shepherd. Let your united prayers ascend to the Father of mercies, who wishes all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth, that this most desirable end be attained, remembering that what is impossible to man may be rendered possible by the influence of Divine grace.

Among the causes which, in a few instances, and, principally in days now happily past, led to the forgetfulness of the extent which belongs to the authority that we exercise, must be reckoned the attempt to apply to the Catholic Church, in the ad-

ministration of the temporalities belonging to her, principles and rules foreign to her spirit and irreconcilable with the authority of her Pastors. The result was such as might have been expected. Peace and harmony were disturbed, the progress of religion checked or entirely impeded, and the Church reproached with the misconduct of her unworthy children. For the purpose of guarding against the recurrence of such evils; we deem it necessary to make a public and authentic declaration of Catholic principles on this important subject. Whatever is offered to God, and solemnly consecrated to His service, whether it be the material temple in which His worshippers assemble; or the ground set apart for the interment of those who repose in God's-field awaiting the promised resurrection, or property, real or personal, intended for the purposes of Divine service, or for the education, support and maintenance of the clergy,—every such thing is sacred and belongs to the Church, and cannot be withdrawn from the service of God without the guilt of sacrilege. The donor or donors of such gifts can exercise no right of ownership over them. With these temporal things, thus separated from common purposes and set apart for the service of the sanctuary, the Church cannot allow any interference that is not subordinate to her authority. The Bishop of each diocese is the representative and organ of that authority, and, without his sanction, no arrangement, howsoever in itself of a purely temporal nature, that has reference to religious worship, has, or can have, force or validity. Whenever the Bishop deems it advisable to acquiesce in arrangements for the administration of Church temporalities which have not originated with the ecclesiastical authority, or which may have arisen from ignorance of its rights, or from a spirit of opposition to them, we declare that such arrangements have force and effect in the Catholic Church, in consequence of such acquiescence, and not from any other cause or principle whatever. And we furthermore declare, that whenever the Bishop of a diocese recognises such arrangements, or acquiesces in them, those charged with the care of church temporalities, whether laymen or clergymen, are bound to render an annual account of their administration to the Bishop, agreeably to the rule prescribed in such cases by the Holy Council of Trent.*

*Sess. xxii, De reformatione, cap. 9.

We exhort you, brethren, to sustain your prelates in their efforts to maintain the discipline of the Church in this no less than in other matters. It is from them, and not from the stranger, and still less from disobedient brethren,—that you are to learn her principles, and those rules of conduct which the experience of centuries has taught her to regard as conducive to your real interests. In this no less than in matters of faith and practice, you have to attend to the Apostle's admonition: "Obey your prelates and be subject to them."*

The Church claims obedience not only when she teaches you the truths of faith, but also when she prescribes rules of conduct. We have the consolation to know that her claims are recognised, to their full extent, by the vast majority of her children; but we know also, that some who profess to look upon her as the Mother who has brought them forth in Christ,—who alone has the words of eternal life;—have, in disregard of her authority,—attached themselves to certain societies, which she either entirely condemns, or views with well founded apprehension. What want, either of body or of mind, is left unprovided for in the principles she teaches and in the holy associations which she has sanctioned? Because men, having rejected the principle of Christian charity, feel the void which they themselves have created, they endeavor to substitute human virtues as the remedy for the evils which nothing less than a divine grace can heal. There can, then, be no necessity for the children of the Church to seek out of her what they can find in her alone; nor any excuse for the insubordination which would regard the exercise of her authority in this matter as uncalled for or injudicious. We exhort our venerable Brethren the clergy to urge the faithful to observe all the regulations on this subject that have emanated from the Holy See, as also those contained in the decrees of the Councils of Baltimore, which have received the sanction of the Supreme Pastor of the Church.

The wants of the Church in this vast country, so rapidly advancing in population and prosperity, impose on us, your pastors, and on you, our children in Christ, peculiar and very arduous duties. We not only have to build up the Church, by

the preaching of the Gospel, and the inculcation of all the virtues it teaches, but also to supply the material wants of religious worship in proportion to the unexampled rapidity with which our flocks increase. We have to establish missions in places where, but a few years since, none, or but few, Catholics were to be found, and where now the children of the Church cry with clamorous importunity for the bread of life. We have to build the Church, where before God's name was not publicly worshipped; and to multiply his temples where they no longer suffice for the constantly increasing wants of the faithful. We have to provide a ministry for the present and future wants of the country, and, in this matter, have to contend with difficulties which are unknown in countries where Religion has been long established, and where the piety and zeal of past generations have furnished ample means for this most important object. We have to provide for the Catholic education of our youth. Not only have we to erect and maintain the Church, the Seminary and the School-house, but we have to found Hospitals, establish orphanages, and provide for every want of suffering humanity, which Religion forbids us to neglect. We thank the Giver of all good gifts for the extraordinary benediction which He has hitherto bestowed upon our efforts, and those of the venerable men whose places we fill. We rejoice at having the opportunity of bearing public testimony to the generous assistance which we have received from our flocks in our respective diocesses. Much, however, as has been done, much still remains to be accomplished. Our churches are nowhere equal to the wants of the Catholic population, and in many places are far from being sufficiently spacious to afford one-half of our people the opportunity of attending Divine worship. We, therefore, exhort you, Brethren, to co-operate generously and cheerfully with your pastors, when they appeal to you in behalf of works of charity and religious zeal. In contributing to Divine worship, you make an offering to God of the gifts He has bestowed on you, and a portion of which He requires should be consecrated to His service, as a testimony of your continued dependence on His Sovereign Mercy. We hope that the examples of your Catholic forefathers, and even of some among yourselves, will be generally felt and not unfrequently imitated; and that

here, as well as elsewhere, the Church will be able to show the proofs of her children's faith in the numerous temples raised to the honor of God's name, in the beauty of His Sanctuary which the true Christian will ever love, and in the ample and permanent provision made for the maintenance of public worship.

The education of candidates for the ministry is one of our most urgent wants. Notwithstanding the multiplied privations, difficulties and embarrassments, which our predecessors experienced, and which have not yet entirely disappeared, they spared no sacrifice in order to rear up successors to their ministry who should be equal to the wants, and worthy of the piety, of their people. These wants increase with the increase of the population; and we have no hesitation in avowing that the efforts hitherto made to supply our churches with priests are far from being adequate. To attain this—the most important of all means to be employed for the maintenance and diffusion of Religion,—we need your co-operation, which we are confident will not be refused. We ask not for ourselves, but for you, and for your children. We seek to avert the evil of hearing the cries of the little ones in Christ for the bread of life, without being able to afford them one to break it to them. We seek to avert the evils resulting from the want of a regular and permanent source for the perpetuation of the ministry, which we have so often experienced, and which, if left without a remedy, must continue to produce most disastrous results.

Without priests educated in the science of the sanctuary and trained up to the practice of its virtues, under our own eyes, or under the care of those to whom we may commit this important trust, we cannot hope to behold the ministry adapted to the wants of the country, or equal to the work which the providence of God has assigned to us. Co-operate, then, generously and perseveringly, with your respective prelates in their efforts to provide a suitable ministry for our infant churches; cultivate the virtuous dispositions of those among your children, who, attracted by the beauty of holiness, manifest in an early age the desire—most frequently the inspiration of divine grace—to consecrate themselves to the service of the altar. Let it be for you a matter of devout thanksgiving and holy exultation, that your offspring prefer the service of God's altar, to all the attractions

of worldly ambition and cupidity. Invoke by fervent prayer the mercy of God, that he may send laborers into His vineyard, that he may raise up ministers of His sanctuary, powerful in word and work, and who, while they possess that knowledge which the lips of the priest are commanded to keep, may exhibit all the virtues of the apostolate which they are called to exercise.

No portion of our charge fills us with greater solicitude than that which our Divine Master, by word and example, has taught us to regard with more than ordinary sentiments of affection—the younger members of our flock. If our youth grow up in ignorance of their religious duties or unpractised in their consoling fulfilment; if, instead of the words of eternal life, which find so full and sweet an echo in the heart of innocence, the principles of error, unbelief or indifferentism, are imparted to them; if the natural repugnance, even in the happiest period of life, to bend under the yoke of discipline, be increased by the example of those whose relation to them gives them influence or authority,—what are we to expect but the disappointment of all the hopes which cause the Church to rejoice in the multiplication of her children! We therefore address you brethren, in the language of affectionate warning and solemn exhortation. Guard carefully those little ones of Christ; “suffer them to approach Him, and prevent them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”* To you, Christian parents, God has committed these His children, whom He permits you to regard as yours; and your natural affection towards whom must ever be subordinate to the will of Him “from whom all paternity in heaven and on earth is named.”† Remember that if for them you are the representatives of God, the source of their existence, you are to be for them depositaries of His authority, teachers of His law, and models by imitating which they may be perfect, even as their Father in heaven is perfect. You are to watch over the purity of their faith and morals with jealous vigilance, and to instil into their young hearts principles of virtue and perfection. What shall be the anguish of the parent’s heart,—what the terrible expectation of judgment that will fill his soul, should his children perish through his

* Mark x, 14.

† Eph. iii, 16.

criminal neglect, or his obstinate refusal to be guided in the discharge of his paternal duties, by the authority of God's Church.* To avert this evil, give your children a Christian education, that is an education based on religious principles, accompanied by religious practices and always subordinate to religious influence. Be not led astray by the false and delusive theories which are so prevalent, and which leave youth without religion, and, consequently, without anything to control the passions, promote the real happiness of the individual, and make society find in the increase of its members, a source of security and prosperity. Listen not to those who would persuade you that religion can be separated from secular instruction. If your children, while they advance in human sciences, are not taught the science of the saints, their minds will be filled with every error, their hearts will be receptacles of every vice, and that very learning which they have acquired, in itself so good and so necessary, deprived of all that could shed on it the light of heaven, will be an additional means of destroying the happiness of the child, embittering still more the chalice of parental disappointment, and weakening the foundations of social order. Listen to our voice, which tells you to walk in the ancient paths; to bring up your children as you yourselves were brought up by your pious parents; to make religion the foundation of the happiness you wish to secure for those whom you love so tenderly, and the promotion of whose interests is the motive of all your efforts, the solace which sustains you in all your fatigues and privations. Encourage the establishment and support of Catholic schools; make every sacrifice which may be necessary for this object: spare our hearts the pain of beholding the youth whom, after the example of our Master, we so much love, involved in all the evils of an uncatholic education, evils too multiplied and too obvious to require that we should do more than raise our voices in solemn protest against the system from which they spring. In urging on you the discharge of this duty, we are acting on the suggestion of the Sovereign Pontiff, who in an encyclical letter, dated 21 November, 1851, calls on all the Bishops of the Catholic world, to provide for the

*John xvii, 12.

religious education of youth. We are following the example of the Irish Hierarchy, who are courageously opposing the introduction of a system based on the principle which we condemn, and who are now endeavoring to unite religious with secular instruction of the highest order, by the institution of a Catholic University,—an undertaking in the success of which we necessarily feel a deep interest, and which, as having been suggested by the Sovereign Pontiff, powerfully appeals to the sympathies of the whole Catholic world.

Our Holy Father Pius IX has recommended to our notice, as well as to that of all the Bishops of the Church, the Society established at Lyons in France, for the purpose of aiding apostolic missionaries in the Propagation of the Faith. Independently of the authority which has thus spoken, our own feelings would prompt us to address you on the subject. From the time of its first establishment, almost thirty years ago, up to the present time, this association has contributed, generously and uninterruptedly, to the support of our missions. If our churches have so rapidly multiplied; if our religious and educational establishments are now comparatively numerous; if new missions and new dioceses have, amidst most appalling discouragements, still continued to be founded,—we must, in truth and justice, acknowledge, that in all this the Association for the Propagation of the Faith has afforded us the most generous and most enlightened co-operation. We feel the obligations which we have to an association which is identified with the progress of religion in every part of the world; and we, therefore, exhort you Brethren to encourage its establishment in your respective districts, agreeably to the wishes of the Sovereign Pontiff, who desires to see the whole Catholic world united in an effort to diffuse the Gospel of Christ throughout all nations. The small annual contribution made to this Association will not interfere with any other effort of Christian zeal or charity; and we cherish the conviction, that its establishment will draw down from God the choicest blessings on all who unite in this truly good work.

Attachment to the civil institutions under which you live, has always marked your conduct: and if we address you on this subject, it is not from any apprehension that you are likely to

vary from the course which you have hitherto pursued. After the example of the apostle, St. Paul, we cannot, however, deem it altogether unnecessary to exhort you ever to discharge your civil duties from the higher motives which religion suggests. Obey the public authorities, not only for wrath but also for conscience sake. Show your attachment to the institutions of our beloved country by prompt compliance with all their requirements, and by the cautious jealousy with which you guard against the least deviation from the rules which they prescribe for the maintenance of public order and private rights. Thus will you refute the idle babbling of foolish men, and will best approve yourselves worthy of the privileges you enjoy, and overcome, by the sure test of practical patriotism, all the prejudices which a misapprehension of your principles but too often produces.

We now address, in a particular manner, our venerable Brethren of the clergy, our fellow-laborers in the vineyard, the praise of whose labors is not with men but with God, and who await the coming of the Master of the vineyard, when the Shepherd and Bishop of souls shall bestow an eternal recompense on zeal and perseverance. Agreeably to the direction of the Holy Council of Trent, we have to exhort them, to endeavor, by the whole tenor of their lives, no less than by the exercise of the apostolic ministry, to guide the flock of Christ to safe and salutary pastures. To the ministers of the New Law the words spoken by God to the Levitical priesthood are more imperatively addressed: "Be ye holy; for I, the Lord, your God, am holy."* Great as is the dignity of the priesthood, holy as are its functions, we must ever remember that we carry about this precious treasure in frail vessels; that we are surrounded with infirmity; and that to us especially is addressed the admonition: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."† We are the light of the world; and to our actions, even more than to our words, do the faithful look up for the rule they are to follow, the example they are to imitate. We are the salt of the earth; and by the wholesome severity of Christian discipline, we are to preserve from the all pervading corruption

* Lev. xi, 44.

† Matth. xxvi, 41.

of the age those whom the Providence of God has committed to our guardianship. Not only have we to consider the faithful of our charge; we have also to remember those other sheep which are not yet of the fold of Christ, and whom the Shepherd of souls designs to bring within its sacred pale. Let us be mindful of the apostolic admonition, and “give offence to no one, that our ministry may not be reviled;”* that the prejudices of education may not be strengthened; or the persevering misrepresentation by which we are assailed receive apparent confirmation from the faults or imperfections that may be discovered in us. Let us be the example of the faithful in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in chastity; let us attend to reading, to exhortation and to doctrine, and thus we shall save ourselves and those that hear us.

Nor can we close this Letter without addressing the consecrated Virgins, who, in the admirable variety of occupations, suggested by zeal and charity, are now, as in the days of St. Cyprian, the more illustrious portion of the flock of Christ, the flower and ornament of the Church. Them we address, after the example of the same holy martyr, in language of affectionate reverence rather than in the words of authority. Them also we must exhort to keep their lamps filled with the oil of good works; to labor assiduously to render themselves still more and more worthy of their Heavenly Spouse, by going from virtue to virtue; and them also we must admonish, that in proportion to the sublime course of religious perfection on which they have entered, is the solicitude we feel that they should secure the crown which is to be their exceeding great reward. To each of them, the Spouse of their souls says: “Behold I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”†

And to you, beloved children of the Laity,—our joy and our crown,—we desire, in concluding, to address a few words of affectionate admonition. We know your faith and the fervor which so many of you exhibit: but our office is one of solicitude and concern. Until the victory is achieved we cannot be without apprehension; and our cares will only cease when we shall have

* II Cor. vi, 3.

† Apoc. iii, 2.

given an account of the stewardship which we have received. Although of the household of God, and children of the faith, you have, by good works, to make your calling and election sure. You are to co-operate with us in preaching the Gospel of Christ by the care of your own households, and by the good example you give to all who come within the sphere of your influence. Walk worthy of your calling; refute the calumnies which are so frequently uttered against the Mother who has brought you forth in Christ, by having your conversation good among those who are estranged from her influence; "that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by the good works which they shall behold in you, glorify God in the day of visitation."* "For the rest, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame, if there be any virtue, any praise of discipline, think on these things. The things which you have both learned and received, and heard and seen—these do ye, and the God of peace shall be with you."—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."†

We direct this our Pastoral Letter to be read publicly in all the churches subject to our jurisdiction.

Given at Baltimore, in National Council, on the Feast of the Ascension, in the year of our Lord 1852.

- ✠ FRANCIS PATRICK, *Archbishop of Baltimore, and Delegate of the Apostolic See.*
- ✠ FRANCIS NORBERT, *Archbishop of Oregon.*
- ✠ PETER RICHARD, *Archbishop of St. Louis.*
- ✠ ANTHONY, *Archbishop of New Orleans.*
- ✠ JOHN, *Archbishop of New York.*
- ✠ JOHN BAPTIST, *Archbishop of Cincinnati.*
- ✠ MICHAEL, *Bishop of Mobile.*
- ✠ MATTHIAS, *Bishop of Dubuque.*
- ✠ RICHARD PIUS, *Bishop of Nashville.*
- ✠ JOHN JOSEPH, *Bishop of Natchez.*
- ✠ RICHARD VINCENT, *Bishop of Wheeling.*

* 1 Pet. ii, 12.

† Philip. iv, 8, 9.

- ✠ PETER PAUL, *Bishop of Zela, and Administrator of Detroit.*
- ✠ JOHN MARY, *Bishop of Galveston.*
- ✠ MICHAEL, *Bishop of Pittsburg.*
- ✠ ANDREW, *Bishop of Little Rock.*
- ✠ JOHN, *Bishop of Albany.*
- ✠ IGNATIUS ALOYSIUS, *Bishop of Charleston.*
- ✠ JOHN MARTIN, *Bishop of Milwaukee.*
- ✠ JOHN BERNARD, *Bishop of Boston.*
- ✠ AMEDEUS, *Bishop of Cleveland.*
- ✠ JOHN, *Bishop of Buffalo.*
- ✠ MARTIN JOHN, *Bishop of Louisville.*
- ✠ JAMES OLIVER, *Bishop of Chicago.*
- ✠ AUGUSTIN M. M., *Bishop of Nesqually.*
- ✠ JOSEPH SADOC, *Bishop of Monterey.*
- ✠ BERNARD, *Bishop of Hartford.*
- ✠ FRANCIS XAVIER, *Bishop of Savannah.*
- ✠ JOHN, *Bishop of Richmond.*
- ✠ JOHN, *Bishop of Agathon, Vicar Apostolic of New Mexico.*
- ✠ JOSEPH, *Bishop of St. Paul.*
- ✠ JOHN BAPTIST, *Bishop of Messina, Vicar Apostolic of the Indian Territory East of Rocky Mountains.*
- ✠ JOHN NEPOMUCEN, *Bishop of Philadelphia.*

